

Pensioners Rally as Russia Moves Closer to Raising Retirement Age

By [Reuters](#)

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Russian lawmakers moved a step closer to approving divisive measures to raise the retirement age on Wednesday — plans that have already provoked protests and hit President Vladimir Putin's approval rating.

A group of about 30 pensioners, opposition figures and other opponents of the changes gathered outside the lower house of parliament before the bill was passed on a second reading.

The measures, meant to relieve pressure on state coffers, have been opposed by both anti-Kremlin activists and Communist lawmakers who rarely oppose government initiatives.

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Putin watered down the draft legislation last month after the protests — the current bill raises the retirement age for men to 65 from 60 and to 60 from 55 for women.

But the concessions have not satisfied critics in a country where average life expectancy in Russia for men is 66 and for women 77. Putin once promised he would never raise the retirement age.

"Hundreds of thousands across the country have raised their voices against the increase of the retirement age," said opposition activist Sergei Udaltsov outside the State Duma before the vote.

The draft legislation must still undergo a third reading and be approved by the senate before being signed into law by Putin.

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